



Government of Bengal

Annual Report of the Royal Botanic Garden and the Gardens in Calcutta and of the Lloyd Botanic Garden, Darjeeling, for 1936-37

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Annual Report of the Royal Botanic Garden and the Gardens in Calcutta and of the Lloyd Botanic Garden Darjeeling, for 1936-37.

Royal Botanic Garden.

1. General.—Records of steady attention to garden routine have alternated with periods in which special attempts have been made to improve the general aspect of the garden and its collections. The garden continues to attract its visitors in increasing numbers. This is especially true of the Indian community. They come by all routes and by all means of locomotion, but there is naturally a tendency to avail oneself more and more of the improved road facilities that now exist, and while visitors arriving by boat or steamer show no evidence of growing fewer, those arriving by car have certainly increased.

The garden roads were never intended for the heavy traffic that daily passes over them. In this sense the Calcutta gardens must be unique. most gardens of similar dimensions and with similar objects the visitor passes on on foot after having left his conveyance at the gate. The restrictions placed upon him to gardens read very much alike wherever one goes. In some he is instructed to keep off the grass. His enjoyment must be obtained from the roads and pathways. He is allowed to look at but not to handle exhibits and such offences as plucking flowers, treading on beds and borders, birdnesting and so on are all provided against in the bye-laws. Custom and long precedent has allowed greater latitude to the visitor to Sibpur. to some of the nursery plant houses he can wander where he likes; he picnics anywhere and takes his music with him, he plays cricket, badminton and tennis and he even lights fires in approved spots when he wishes to cook his food. It is all to the benefit of the garden in that greater public enjoyment and therefore support is ensured and on the whole it must be said the latitude allowed is not taken advantage of. But the freedom does throw responsibilities on the staff that are escaped by many gardens and undoubtedly that which exercises in most is the obligation of keeping the roads in a state fit for the present day heavy wheeled traffic. Garden routine during the year has in consequence alternated with what has been the most far reaching attempts yet made to cope with this difficulty. Some of the main roads have been given a foundation that will stand up to cars while a macadamised surface to prevent the dust nursance has rounded off the improvement. Where the improvements have been carried out the beneficial effects are marked. They would be still better if all owners of cars would remember that a garden is not a speed track. It will take time to complete road work, however, for what provision goes in this direction has now to be spared from resources intended for the garden itself.

Provision for one major work, however, is no longer a drain on garden funds. The river bank revetment is now almost completed. It has been a long and costly business and it is well that it went over to a department qualified for it. Only minor additions and repairs to the bank remain.

A scheme is under preparation for a new pontoon, the existing structure having worn out beyond economic repair after a life of over 20 years.

The monsoon began early but was normal in duration and there were no untoward effects to plants from climatic causes during the year. Annuals were late and were scarcely up to the standard of previous years but considerable variety was yet grown with fair success as was evidenced from the position Sibpur plants took in horticultural shows. Efforts towards additions to the garden of trees and shrubs not represented have been continued. This has been a special feature of garden work for some years now for the collections are not as rich as they might be although individually some very fine specimens are represented. Additions have been to the open, to rockeries, to plant houses and to the reserve collections housed in the nurseries.

Rock gardens in Bengal apart from those in the hills are seldom staged in the open; the climate of the plains militates against such location. It is more usual to find them in shaded houses and the garden houses have all the usual aspects and variety of plants selected for such staging. Its rockeries in the open are rarer. They have had their full share of attention during the year as the following additions show:—

Verbascum giganteum, Turnera ulmifolia var. elegans, Zanthoxylum martinicense, Cyclamen sp., Primula malacoides, Fatsia japonica, Kalanchoe sp., Rudbeckia Californica, Passiflora atropurpurea, Azalea sp., Saxifraga atropurpurea, Iris japonica, Anemone japonica, Rumex sanguineus, Montbretia sp., Tibouchina sp., Hydrangea japonica, Kerria japonica, Achimens sp., Zamia pumila var. latifolia, Zamia floridana, Saxifraga sarmentosa, Heliconia rosea, Heliconia striata, Euonymus patens, Kniphofia aloides, Salvia coccinea, Sagittaria saggitifolia, Miconia Hookeriana, Cleome pungens, Clidemia vittata, Narcissus, Talinum sp., Convolvulus major, Gladiolus, of sorts, Epiphyllum, Achillea sibirica, Aster sp. (creeping daisy) and Clematis Jackmanii.

Not all are typical rock garden plants but the drier conditions possible in the mounds of rock gardens allow of attempts at the cultivation of plants that would not otherwise have much chance of success. In the new Rockery the following are reported to have flowered nicely:—Aster novae-belgii, Portlandia grandiflora, species of Geranium, Saxifraga, Narcissus, Verbascum, Anemone, Cyclamen and Camellia.

No fewer than 847 perennials, trees, shrubs or climbers, were planted out to permanent situation in the open. They include the following list new to or ill-represented in our collections:—

Hibiscus hirta, Fugosia hakeaefolia, Canarium rufum, Lantana salvifolia, Lantana Sellowiana, Passiflora capsularis, Ficus aurea, Morina sp., Paranephelium, Citharexylum sp., Carya sp., Catalpa Kaempferi, Meratia praecox, Jasminum dicholomum, Calophyllum Calaba, Eugenia coronata, Grewia populifolia, Chamaedora Elatior, Orania phillippinensis, Normanbya sp., Clematis Virginiana, Cassia spectabilis, Aristolochia Gc.dieana.

The palm houses and the orchid house were put into thorough repair while the addition of a large number of Eastern Himalayan orchids, collected under the writer's supervision from Mungpoo, added to the wealth of Orchid bloom when the hot weather came in. It is to be hoped that the new experimental tank near the flower garden will lead to our being able to eliminate or overcome those conditions that retard or destroy the development of some Nymphaea and especially of Victoria. This last certainly grows more freely in Calcutta than it does at Sibpur. It is possible that the slight differences in salinity of the water are responsible just as the difference between Barrackpore and Calcutta soils, for instance, allow of the former being much better suited to

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the cultivation of Roses. Amongst horticultural efforts the propagation of Magnolia Pterocarpa and the continued artificial pollination of Amherstia call for special remark. Although the quantity of seed obtained was small it was of sound condition and as the demand for it is great the initial efforts towards its production may eventually lead to a better distribution of this the most beautiful of all flowering trees.

The vistas and open spaces of the garden were all kept in lawnlike condition. Machinery has made this possible to an extent that was not thought of some years back. During the cold and early hot season the garden is livened up by the colour of flowering annuals, but it would be improved at other times by greater masses of bedding material like Cannas.

One of the most commendable attempts at improvements during the year has been the Curator's effort to replace and straighten plant labels in certain of the divisions. This should be continued till the whole garden is treated, for although we suffer from what must be wilful and ill-intentioned destruction nothing looks worse in a garden than distorted and illegible labels. The improvements effected catches the eye so strikingly that this work must go on to completion. In respect of general cleanliness, in respect of its lawnlike conditions, in the matters of colour, variety and number of flowering annuals and of other content the garden is richer than it used to be.

- 2. Plant and seed exchange.—No fewer than 1,194 packets and 7 lbs. of seed were distributed to botanical and horticultural institutions throughout the world. Every continent is represented in the list of recipients and we have had supplies from most in return. For horticultural and roadside planting 5,381 plants were despatched and over 2,000 were received from various places.
- 3. Herbarium and Library.—Work in the herbarium continued along the usual lines, the opportunities for identification of collections and for the study of special groups of systematic importance being freely availed of. Identifications on some 3,500 specimens were carried out, heavy collections arriving from the Bhutan and the Sikkim Himalaya. An interesting collection that of Dr. Helfer made between 1836-1840, was reported on for the botanical museum at Prague which has housed the material, but which lacked sufficient Indian material to allow of useful comparisons and safe identifications. Material help and information on plants of economic importance added to the variety of work claimed from the herbarium staff. Information on the Artemesias, the source of Santonin, on the Nutmeg of commerce, on Papaver, on Schizolobium, on Poinciana and on plants harmful to the Tea plant come to mind in this connection.

There was an unusually large number of specimens on loan. This is mainly due to the work of Mr. Biswas at Kew and of Mr. Mookerji at Edinburgh. All our Labiateae have gone out to the latter, while Mr. Biswas has had several cases of material including the ferns, the nomenclature of which he is revising and the material of which he is bringing up to proper herbarium standard. Smaller quantities have been with the authorities at Dehra Dun, at Singapore, at the British Museum and at Shillong with Mr. Pur Kayastha of the Assam Forest Service. Besides the above, 54 specimens of living and specially preserved material of particular species of plants and plant parts, herbarium duplicates and photographs of particluar plants were supplied free to specialists in and out of India. Amongst these figure flowers of Magnolia, photographs of Ficus, Bauhinia and Kydia species, specimens of aquatic plants, ferns, materials of Salvinia, copies from Roxburgh's Icones and preserved material of the common Coniferae of the Eastern Himalaya.

Returns of loans to the herbarium include 767 sheets of Primula from Edinburgh, 18 sheets of Crepis loaned to the University of California and 283 sheets of Brassica loaned to the Economic Botanist, Cawnpore. All these were reincorporated. One sheet of Rheum Inopenetum came from H. H. The Maharaja of Sikkim.

Under exchange account 108 sheets of Asiatic Palms from Singapore and 41 sheets of various flowering plants from Buitenzorg were notable additions.

An interesting acquisition to the herbarium is a sheet of the acquatic Aldrovanda vesiculosa presented by Dr. J. C. Sen of the Presidency College, Calcutta. This is interesting in two ways, namely, that it has not been collected since Dr. Roxburgh first discovered it in the Salt Lakes near Calcutta in the beginning of the 19th Century and that it has now been collected from Vikrampur, a locality removed by several hundred miles from its place of first occurrence. The writer's Sumsing Forest collections numbering some have been added to the herbarium. Some 3,541 specimens were mounted and 1,292 sheets put into the herbarium. 340 covers, generic and specific, were renewed. Work on the aquatic plants for the Malaria Survey of India went to the Press again and should be out during the year. The Curator of the Herbarium contributed short notes on "Two new flowering plants" "Muddy water of the river Hooghly", "Resume on the literature on medicinal plants" and "Association of some common algae with animals in Indian Waters". The budget allotment for purchase of journals and books for the library was spent in full, 30 journals or periodicals and 17 books being purchased. 62 volumes were received back from loan leaving 26 volumes still out at the end of the year. Some 170 volumes were bound. Library authorities are grateful for the receipt of some 96 numbers of miscellaneous journals, kindly presented by Sir David Prain and by Lt.-Col. A. T. Gage.

- 4. Publications.—Volume XIV, Part 1 of the Annals of the Royal Botanic Gardens dealing with the genus Dioscorea by Sir David Prain and Mr. Burkill was published during the year. Part II of the same work is still in the Press.
- 5. Finance.—Out of the total budget allotment of Rs. 53,311 for staff and permanent establishment Rs. 53,198 were spent and under all other heads the expenditure amounted to Rs. 46,650 being practically the full allotment for the year. There was a net saving of Rs. 116 after a few reappropriations to excesses had been effected.

The sale-proceeds of surplus plants and seeds and minor forms of revenue realised Rs. 2,224.

- 6. Staff.—The writer held the post of Superintendent throughout the year. Mr. K. Biswas was Curator of the Herbarium from 1st April to 8th September 1936. He was on study leave out of India from 9th September 1936 to 31st March 1937. Mr. T. D. Srinivasan was Officiating Curator of the Herbarium from 9th September 1936 to 1st January 1937, and Mr. V. Narayanaswami, Systematic Assistant to the Botanical Survey of India, was Officiating Curator of the Herbarium from 2nd January to 31st March 1937.
- Mr. N. Mitra was Curator of the Gardens throughout the year while Mr. Md. Quasem Ali was Assistant Curator from 1st April 1936 to 23rd February 1937. He was on leave from 24th February 1937 to 31st March 1937.

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Mr. K. S. Joneja was Overseer from 1st April to 5th November 1936, when he was transferred to the Government Cinchona Plantation, Mungpoo. Mr. Gholam Mohiuddin was Overseer from 6th November 1936 to 31st March 1937.

Mr. A. T. Banerjee was Head Clerk throughout the year.

CALCUTTA GARDENS.

Owing to the late advent of the cold weather and the prolonged rains the vear under review has been one of late flowering winter annuals attendant with a shorter period of bloom. Otherwise, the display has been satisfactory and an increased number of annuals in pots were colourfully staged at various vantage points of the lawns and lake in the Eden Gardens. The Dahlias have been worthy of remark. The introduction of some distinctive bulbs and seeds, under special methods of culture, proved immensely successful, some of the individual blooms attaining a size of 10" to 12" in diameter, as witnessed and appraised by many of the visiting public. Six pots of Freesias bloomed shyly but this is encouraging. The Victoria regia in the Eden Gardens exceeded expectations in that there were 30 plants, some of their leaves averaging over 5 feet in diameter, and 15 plants were put out in the Dalhousie Square tank. Over 700 flowers were recorded. The success of this is largely due to constant attention to its no easy propagation. The interest evoked from these giant water lilies was apparent from the photo-prints and descriptive paragraphs published in the leading Calcutta daily papers. Under experiment, one of the plants actually supported a bucket of water weighing 22lbs.

Great attention was given to the returing of a large section of the lawn near the Bandstand in the Eden Gardens. The new lawn was most satisfactory but owing to its popularity, where crowds of the public enjoy their evening walk, it has been somewhat difficult to maintain its uniform smoothness and verdancy. There are always loiterers who will persist in walking on it after a heavy shower of rain, leaving deep indentations all over the softened surface.

As much as was possible, with the limited funds available, has been done towards the aesthetic, horticultural and sanitary improvement of the three gardens during the year. In addition to the general routine work numerous flowering shrubs and trees were planted out, sections of hedges refilled, storm damaged trees pruned and trimmed, flower beds treated with lime, short cuts across lawns minimised, and Court measures taken against those offenders who have wilfully abused the privileges of these gardens. Aerial roots of the central Banyan tree were treated during the rains and four of these have now struck ground soil. A cemented drain 150 feet long by 2 feet wide was laid along the south side of the Coolie Lines—a much needed improvement—to mitigate the insanitary conditions existing there. Funds not permitting, the completion of another 200 feet of this drain has had to be held in abeyance. The drainage from the premises of the Calcutta Cricket Club was also another standing problem, but a personal interview with the authorities of the Club resulted in a concrete drain being made by the Club to run from their premises into the lake. Hitherto, the water used to lie stagnant in the ride nullahs.

In recent years the eradicating of ants and other destructive grubs from the nursery beds has meant a steadily rising expense. Their pestilentia incursions are accountable for no small proportion of seedling loss, and, in conjunction with the unsatisfactory waterproofing qualities of the "hoogla" coverings during the rains, these losses are considerable. To minimise them and ensure a higher percentage of plants for bedding out, 2 concrete vats for seed-sowing and transplanting have been constructed in the nurseries, each with a surrounding drain to act as a moat. It is in view to ultimately cover these vats with wired-glass of local manufacture and to dispense with the recurring expenditure of "hooglas." Repairs were done to the greenhouse, and the propagation of Orchids, Ferns, and other flora within, consistently improved and augmented. The Vandas of recent purchase from Sikkim gave magnificent blooms while the Cattleyas, Cypripediums, Dendrobiums, etc., flowered throughout the year in their respective seasons with pleasing perfection.

Visitors who have inconsiderately dragged benches across the Eden Garden lawns, thereby ruining the turf, have now been countered by the erection of immovable benches, the legs of which are embedded in concrete blocks. Eighteen of these benches have been so fixed in shady and convenient sites of the garden. The benches in the Dalhousie Square Gardens will also have to be fixed in this manner during the following year.

Both the Royal Botanic and the Eden Gardens have been fortunate this year as the location of the objects of public benefaction. Although the work in neither is yet finished to the satisfaction of the donors, tube wells for the provision of drinking water for the public have been sunk in both. Opportunity is taken here to thank those Indian gentlemen through whose beneficence the long felt want of drinking water is at last about to be satisfied.

A section of this report must reiterate the annual grievance arising from the Eden Garden bugbear—the "Jheels." There is never sufficient money to tackle wholeheartedly a systematic dredging of these lakes, and year by year the silt is accumulating, especially at the South end where the mud is now practically at water level. Moreover, the growth of aquatic weeds is progressing alarmingly and the hygenic question must be seriously faced by the Public Health Department in their anti-malarial campaign. The reasonable recommendation by the Government Entomologist of a separate grant for the continual dredging and cleanliness of these lakes has not yet materialised. In the meanwhile, with the limited labour and time at the Assistant Curator's disposal, the jheels are receiving the maximum attention.

The number of Football and Cricket enthusiasts have literally increased by some thousands during the last few years and to say that 75 per cent. of them flow through the Curzon and Eden Gardens is no exaggerated estimate, and amongst them there is always a recalcitrant element who deliberately trample down flower beds and growing bedges. Within our own jurisdiction, it is incumbent on the Garden staff to act daily as policemen to prevent damage but it is quite impossible to cope with the colossal crowds that stampede through to the major matches. The north and south boundary walls of the Eden Garden are too low to prevent breaking through and jumping over, and a necessary deterrent is most imperative. Sections of the hedges along these ends and that of the one surrounding the Calcutta Cricket Club grounds are in a deplorable condition, despite the fact that they were generously replanted up earlier in the year. Their state is wholly due to the above abuse. raising of the existing walls or the fixation of spiked iron railings-both works outside the competency of garden officers—would seem to offer the only solution to a growing abuse.



Finance.—Out of the total grant of Rs. 32,973 under all heads there was a small net saving of Rs. 10 only. Receipts which are mainly from fishing dues but which of recent years have been added to by fees from Cinema Companies allowed to stage scenes amounted to Rs. 58.

Staff.—Mr. Merlin Jones was Assistant Curator from 1st April 1936 to 29th March 1937, except for 30th and 31st March 1937, when he went on leave.

Mr. J. A. Hulbert was Overseer, Government Gardens, Calcutta, throughout the year. He was in charge of the Calcutta Gardens during the absence on leave of Mr. Jones.

LLOYD BOTANIC GARDEN, DARJEELING.

Work in the Lloyd Botanic Garden undisturbed by abnormal climatic conditions followed the usual routine throughout the year. The rain measurement recorded was 128.69 inches being in excess of the average. Some damage is reported from frost and from individual heavy rainfalls but nothing beyond what could be easily repaired. The rock garden to which the Curator has given special attention of recent years has been extended towards the south. Additions to it mostly of alpines have been liberally made as the following list shows:—

Rhododendron campanulatum, Rhododendron vaccinifolium, Arabis alpina, Aubrietia Campbelli, Heracleum sublineare, Luculia gratissima, Luculia pinceana. Disporum calcaratum, Disporum pullum, Nirembergia Hippomanica, Smilacina fusca, Smilacina oleracea, Polygonum speciosum, amplexicaule, Polygonum chinense, Polygonum molle, Polygonum tortuosum, Rumex acetosella, Geranium polyantha, Sarcopyramis nepalensis, Lysimachia evalvis, Brunella vulgaris, Fragaria vesca, Swertia tibetica, Cynanchum Senecio pachycarpus, Senecio graciliflorus, vincetoxicum, Senecio Mortoni, Parnassia nubicola, Viola diffusa, Galium triflorum, Aster diplostiphioides, Majus dentatus, Ranunculus affinis, Lloydia serotina, Hygrophylla polsperma, Ajuga macrosperma, Potentilla peduncularis, Lycopodium serratum, Tiarella polyphylla, Chirita urticaefolia, Gentiana elliptica, Androsace Hookeriana, Androsace Poisoni, Androsace coronopifolia, Thalictrum Dipterocarpum, Primula obtusifolia, Spirea aruncus, Sambucus niger, Calanthe alpina, Calanthe odora, Calanthe brevicornu, Calanthe masuca, Cremastra Wallichiana, Impatiens spirifer, Impatiens arguta, Agathea coelestis, Strobilanthes divaricatus, Globularia trichosantha, Erinus alpina. Alyssum saxatile, Alyssum serpyllifolium, Helinium sp., Crawfurdia speciosa, Iris Clarkei, Epilobium Gazania splendens, Antennaria Margaritacea. canariensis, roseum, Erica, Rheum accuminatum, Delphinium vestitum, Hutis linctoria, Lychnis alpina, Kaulfussia ameloides, Horminum pyrenaicum, Anagalis grandiflora, Linaria alpina, Diascia Barberae, Calamintha alpina, Campanula turbinata, Anthemis tinctoria, Spergula pilifera, Sedum coeruleum, Didimocarpus pulchra, Leontopodium sibericum, Armeria formosa, Adenophora Bulleyana, Doronicum caucasicum, Rubus niveus, etc.

Some 56 beds for common Himalayan plants arranged according to their families have been prepared for the benefit of students who visit the garden. Annuals in beds and potted plants flowered freely amongst others the following new to or rare in the garden:—Meconopsis superba, Meconopsis simplicifolia, Primula peteolaris, Primula denticulata, Primula sikkimensis, Palygonum amplexicaule, Polygonum speciosum, Saxifraga hispidula, Caltha palustris, Calanthe brevicornu, Calanthe odora, Asphodelus luteus, Genista Daisyhill,

Iris ensata, Iris Clarkei, Aster diplostiphioides, Aster tricephalus, Nirembergia frutescens, Nirembergia Hippomanica, Smilacina fusca, Smilacina oleracea, Disporum calcaratum, Globulaira trichosantha, Impatiens arguta, Impatiens spirifer, Agathea coelestis, Senecio graciliflorus, Gentiana ornata, Potentilla Griffithii, Anaphalis triplinervis, etc.

Meconopsis superba is probably the most noteworthy. It flowered from seed, said to be for the first time at the Lloyd Botanic Garden. The young trees and shrubs have all been attended to as usual by manuring, pruning and clearing of the dead parts and by replacements. Several labels of plants that have become effaced have been rewritten and fixed up. Some 225 young plants were planted out to permanent situations in the garden during the year. Of these Melilatus indicum and Disporum pullum are new additions. A receipt of 361 packets of seed is recorded amongst which a lot of 42 packets from the Imperial University, Taiwan, is the most noteworthy. The following distributions were made:—seeds, 5,382 packets, seedlings 10,479, plants 237 and bulbs 48. The Curator reports a list of successful germinations of seed received from correspondents the individual item of which, however, need not be recorded. The usual repairs and paintings of garden seats, shelters, gates, fences, etc., have been carried out while the conservatory and glass houses have been made watertight.

A tour for the collection of alpines mainly for distribution purposes was undertaken by the Curator to Karpanong and Changu to Kapup and Jalep La. The proximity of the Lloyd Botanic garden to areas providing the botanist with a chance of rare alpines calls for a special adaptability in this respect from its Curator. Successive Curators have maintained a high standard of work in this collection and distribution. It is work that calls for a standard of botanical knowledge combined with energy and physical fitness for it is no easy matter to reach the pathless heights and brave the elements where the rarest of nature's treasures often bloom. The gate register showed a total of 50,644 visitors to the garden during the year and the garden authorities took their usual full part in efforts to make the annual Darjeeling Flower Show a success.

Finance.—The net budget allotment was Rs. 15,935 for all purposes. Of this Rs. 15,783 were spent.

Staff.—Mr. S. N. Basu was Curator, Lloyd Botanic Garden, Darjeeling throughout the year.

C. C. CALDER.

Superintendent, Royal Botanic Garden, Calcutta.

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